

Docket No.: 279096US6PCT/mca

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

IN RE APPLICATION OF: Koji TOKUDA, et al. ALLOWED: APRIL 27, 2011

SERIAL NUMBER: 10/553,199 GROUP: 1733

FILED: October 13, 2005 EXAMINER: YANG, JIE

FOR: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PRODUCING REDUCED METAL

**COMMENTS ON STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE**

COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22313-1450

SIR:

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication of allowability of the claimed invention. In response to the Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance in the Notice of Allowance of April 27, 2011, Applicants respectfully submit the following comments.

In the Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance on page 6 of the Notice of Allowance mailed August 12, 2010, paragraph 2 states in part:

However, US '471 does not specify that in the step of melting, the furnace gas is flowed in the direction of the movement of the hearth, which can prevent oxidation gas flowing from the discharging step to the cooling step by the flow rate controlling partitions as recited in the instant claims.

While the comment above appears to be directed to independent Claims 1 and 16, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claim 2 does not include all of the elements recited above. For example, Claim 2 recites that "the furnace gas in the melting step is allowed to flow in the direction of the movement of the hearth" and not "preventing oxidation gas flowing from the discharging step to the cooling step by the flow rate-controlling partitions." Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the above quoted statement applies only to

Claims 1 and 16 (and claims dependent therefrom), and not to independent Claim 2 (and Claim 15 dependent therefrom) to the extent the language used in the statement differs from the language of the claims.

Respectfully Submitted,

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